

T TO BE TAKEN
FROM THE LIBRARY

OB ER LIES

Upstairs
378.744
B0
A.M. 1826
a

Boston University
College of Liberal Arts
Library

THE GIFT OF The Author

June 1926.

Upstairs
378.744
B0
A.M. 1926
c

Ideal
Double Reversible
Manuscript Cover
PATENTED NOV. 15, 1898
Manufactured by
Adams, Cushing & Foster

28-7

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE CHINESE THEATRE

Submitted by

Ruth Imogene Oberlies

(A.B., Cotner College, 1922)

In partial fulfilment of requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

1926

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
LIBRARY

Theater - China
" X
Series

p+398

Upstairs
378.744
B0
A.M., 1926
5

OUTLINE

THESIS: The Chinese Theatre

Part I - Historical Background. Introduction.

A. Chapter I - The Early History of Chinese Drama

1. The "Pear Garden" Myth
2. The Origin of the Drama according to more realistic records.
3. Gradual development of the theatre to the Ming Dynasty.

B. Chapter II - The Later Conditions and Development of the Chinese Drama

1. The Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)
2. The development of the theatre under the Manchus to the present.

Part II - The Essentials and Technique of the Chinese Theatre

A. Chapter III - General Characteristics of the Theatre.

1. First Impressions
2. Types of Plays.
 - (a) Cheng-pan, or historical plays
 - (b) Chu-tou, domestic plays
 - (c) Ku-wei, farces.
3. External Aspects of
 - (a) The Village Theatre
 - (b) The Permanent City Theatre

OUTLINE

THEME: The Chinese Theatre

Part I - Historical Background, Introduction

1. Chapter I - The Early History of Chinese Drama

1. The "Peking Opera" Myth
2. The Origin of the Drama according to early realistic reports
3. Historical development of the theatre to the Ming Dynasty

2. Chapter II - The Later Conditions and Development of the Chinese Drama

1. The Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)
2. The development of the theatre under the Manchus to the present

Part II - The Essentials and Techniques of the Chinese Theatre

1. Chapter III - General Characteristics of the Theatre

1. Peking Opera
2. Types of Plays
 - (a) Grand opera or historical plays
 - (b) Domestic plays
 - (c) Farces
3. Technical aspects of

- (a) The Village Theatre
- (b) The Peking Opera Theatre

B. Chapter IV - Inner Aspects of the Theatre

1. Actors

- (a) Their history
- (b) Costumes, make-up, etc.
- (c) Character types

2. The Place of Music on the Chinese Stage

- (a) General Character
- (b) The Orchestra
- (c) Musical Instruments

- 1' - Shou
- 2' - Ti-tze
- 3' - Peng-ku
- 4' - Hu Ch'in
- 5' - Ch'a
- 6' - La-pa
- 7' - Hsien-tze
- 8' - Ku
- 9' - Yueh-Ch'in
- 10' - Chioa-pan or pan-tze
- 11' - Lo

C. Chapter V - The Conventions of the Chinese Stage

Part III - Modern Tendencies

B. Chapter IV - Inner Aspects of the Theatre

I. Actors

- (a) Their history
- (b) Costumes, make-up, etc.
- (c) Character types

2. The Place of Music on the Chinese Stage

- (a) General character
- (b) The Orchestra
- (c) Musical Instruments

- 1' - Horn
- 2' - Flute
- 3' - Pao-ch'iao
- 4' - Ho-ch'iao
- 5' - Ho-ch'iao
- 6' - Ho-ch'iao
- 7' - Ho-ch'iao
- 8' - Ho-ch'iao
- 9' - Ho-ch'iao
- 10' - Ho-ch'iao or Ho-ch'iao
- 11' - Ho

C. Chapter V - The Conventions of the Chinese Stage

Part III - Modern Theatricals

THE CHINESE THEATRE

Introduction

The Western view of music and drama is so different from the Oriental that many do not enjoy the "sounding brass and clanging cymbal" of the Chinese theatre. Consequently there are comparatively few books on the subject. Another reason is that the drama stands on a relatively lower level than some other Chinese arts, such as lyric poetry and landscape painting. However, the skill of the Chinese in portraying life through the drama is as great as that of the Occidental actor, although the methods may be different. In the last few years the interest in the Chinese stage has increased both in China and in Western countries.¹

2 "Though Chinese drama is a case of arrested development, it has the merit of being a thoroughly popular art. It represents the old legends of the nation, the famous novels familiar to the masses, intrigues such as occur on every hand, the music of the various provinces, and the moral ideals of the four hundred millions. In fact, the Chinese consider the theatre fit for the gods; for whenever the people of a village

¹"The Chinese Theatre" - A. F. Zucker, Preface

² Article in The Literary Digest - August 23, 1924. A.E.Zucker

wish to thank or appease their deities, they give dramatic performances for the pleasure of the gods and, incidentally, of themselves. The theatre may be called in a manner a mirror of the Chinese nation."

²The Chinese theatre may be said to occupy the warmest place in the heart of every Chinese when it comes to pure pleasure. The drama might well be set apart as the national recreation. Life would indeed be a drab monotony of existence were it not for the periodical performances of stage plays. "It is from this source that a certain familiarity with the great historical episodes of the past may be picked up over a pipe and a cup of tea; while the farce, occasionally perhaps erring on the side of breadth, affords plenty of merriment to the laughter-loving crowd."

The Chinese people love drama of all kinds, and some sort of a theatrical performance accompanies every festival, for they enjoy acting and watching others perform. Birthdays of parents and gods are celebrated in this way; also impending calamities, as flood, plague, or eclipse of the sun or moon. The principal and professed object of the Chinese theatre was and is to honor or propitiate some god or spirit.

Perhaps it would be well to give a birdseye view of the Chinese theatre as it developed before taking up the

²"The Civilization of China" - Giles, p. 163

periods separately.

¹Early writers on the subject speak of the decadence of the drama after the Yuan Dynasty (1280-1368), but according to Mr. Wang Kuo - wei's recently compiled statistics, there is, numerically at least, no decrease in the production of dramas. Dr. Hu Shih says that only technically can the drama of the Ming Dynasty be said to be inferior because the "compact and unified plays of the Yuan period become diffuse and of serpentine length. In characterization, poetic diction, and content, however, they are far superior. Modern Chinese drama holds that the very highest point of the drama was reached in two historic tragedies of the Ching Dynasty" (1644-1911) although there has been no history of Chinese drama written.

The general characteristics of the Chinese drama are not so different from our own. The plays^{are} divided into acts often corresponding to our four or five. The drama is presented in a manner strikingly similar to our greatest period of the drama, -Shakespeare's time. Even the classification of content is not so different from ours.

Historical drama prevails, due perhaps to the great love the the Chinese for his long tradition, and the representation of early heroes is always well received. Family

¹"The Chinese Theatre" - Zucker - Preface

drama is also very popular, including the court room and criminal drama. The magic, or mythical drama, corresponding to Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream" is common, and some of the best plays in this group treat superstitious beliefs satirically. The dramas of character are not so different from those of Moliere. Dramas of intrigue are found on every program. There is found, too, religious drama resembling somewhat our miracle or mystery plays, and among modern innovations, even the monodrama, a dramatic form in which only one person does the acting, is evident.

One notices that the influence exerted by the three main religions of China is reflected in the plays. The moral background of the majority of plays is supplied by Confucianism. The venerated scholar is more of a hero on the stage than the warrior, while of course the outstanding virtue displayed is filial piety. Taoism, the religion of superstitions, gives rise to many of the delightful mythological and ghostly figures that throng the Chinese plays. Buddhism furnishes much of the humor for the stage through the Buddhist priests, who are often portrayed as lazy, ignorant, superstitious characters, much like those drawn by Boccaccio or

There is also very poor, including the court room and
adjacent areas. The walls, or physical areas, correspond-
ing to Shakespeare's "Winter Night's Dream" is common,
and some of the best plays in this group first represent-
ative of the nation. The drama of character are
not so different from those of Voltaire. Drama of re-
ligion are found on every page. There is French, too,
religious drama revealing character on a scale of
mystery plays, and some modern innovations, even the
modernism, a dramatic form in which only one person does
the acting, is evident.

The notices that the influence exerted by
the three main religions of China is reflected in the
plays. The novel background of the majority of plays
is supplied by Confucianism. The venerated scholar is
one of a name on the stage than the warrior, while of
course the outstanding virtue displayed in this play.
Indeed, the religion of superstition, gives rise to
many of the delightful mystical and ghostly figures
that adorn the Chinese plays. Buddhist figures such
of the drama for the stage through the Buddhist system,
and are often portrayed as law, ignorant, superstitious
characters, such like those drawn by Goethe or

Chaucer. With the exception of some satire on the migration of souls, the Sakyamouni or Buddhistic doctrine has exerted little influence. Whenever chanting priests or monks are brought on the stage, they are burlesqued. The tolerance of the Chinese toward religion has been termed "politeness toward possibilities." ¹

The main theme of Chinese drama is, like that of any other country, the human side of life. Through the stage we see the Chinese as they see themselves, and oftentimes their revelations are naive and refreshing.

¹ Zucker, A.E., The Chinese Theatre, Preface.

Chapter I

The Early History of Chinese Drama

Chinese historians generally agree that the Chinese drama originated in the Tang Dynasty, when Emperor Ming Huang employed a company of three hundred comedians and directed them himself, in the "Garden of Pear trees." He was not only passionately fond of music but he also had a thorough-going knowledge of its principles. The young girls of the harem, several hundred in number, were also later attached to the academy as students. On the emperor's birthday they were ordered by the empress to perform some musical numbers in the "Palace of Eternal Life".

Bazin, the French scholar, says in the introduction to his translation of four Chinese plays: "Surely it is a great thing that, at a time when the Chinese had as yet no idea of dramatic performances, a man who had founded the institution of Han-Lin, and could justly call himself 'the teacher of his nation,' conceived and carried out single-handed a work of art, in which we find for the first time with all its marvellous charm, the union of lyric poetry with the drama."

William Stanton writes, in "The Chinese Drama" that the emperor Ming - Huang, who at first was a wise and

"The Chinese Theatre" - Chu-Chia-Chien, p. 15

"The Chinese Theatre" - Zucker, p. 3

judicious ruler, later developed a love of sensuality and luxury. Becoming enamored of his beautiful daughter-in-law, he took her into his own seraglio, and she soon succeeded in getting raised to the highest position next to the throne.

On the evening of the festival of the Herdsman and the Spinning Damsel, which is celebrated the seventh day of the seventh month, the emperor and his favorite consort were gazing into the starlit sky. Legend says that the Herdsman and the Spinning Damsel are two lovers who each inhabit a star separated by the Silver River (Milky Way), and are unable to meet except on the seventh night of the seventh moon, when magpies from all parts of the earth assemble, and with their linked bodies form a bridge which enables the damsel to cross to her lover. Remembering the occasion of the festival, Yan-Kuei-Fei burst in protestations of affection, assuring the emperor that she would never leave him, but tread with him the spiritual walks of eternity. To reward such love, the emperor ordered, as a novel amusement for her, an entertainment by a number of young children, carefully dressed and instructed to recite for her the heroic achievements of his ancestors. This was claimed to be the origin of the Chinese drama.

The Pear Garden story is generally accepted, but Chinese who have come in contact with Occidental science have been searching for a more realistic record of the beginnings of the theatre. Mr. Wang Kuo Wei has collected much interesting data, which promises to lead back to the real beginnings of the drama.

About 2,000 B.C. there were found mediums called wu and hsien, women and men, who danced and sang songs in the worship of the gods, to exorcise evil spirits, to act as mourners in times of calamity, or to induce the gods to send rain. It was believed that the gods descended to earth and communicated with men thru these mysterious beings, especially in the course of violent dances.

This became so popular that I-Yin, famous minister of the Shang Dynasty (1766-1122 B.C) issued an edict prohibiting it. "The late sovereign instituted punishments for the officers, and warned the men in authority saying, 'If you dare to have constant dancing in your mansions, and drunken singing in your houses, I call it wu-fashion.'" ¹

The pendulum swung the other way in the Ch'an Dynasty. Regulations were in order. Rules regarding one's dress, speech, and posture in court and private life, are the prototypes of those governing Chinese public and social life to the present day. Although the spontaneity and mimicry of the mediums were suppressed at this time, in later dynasties references are made to their beauty of costumes and charm of singing and dancing.

"These performances of the early Chinese centered about the divine worship. Even at the present time all the large theatrical performances in China, outside the larger cities, are a form of divine worship, usually harvest festivals.

¹Quoted by DeGroot - "Religious Systems of China".

staged by way of thanksgiving for good crops." At almost any time of the year one may see idol processions, especially if some great calamity is impending, such as a plague epidemic, a flood, or an eclipse. Thus the theatre is closely associated with temple worship, which fact gives rise to a reasonable belief that another possible origin of the drama was the early ancestor worship in which the deceased was impersonated by one of his descendants. The ceremony of honoring the ancestor could easily be expanded into a representation of heroic instances in his illustrious life. Gods, as well as men, were impersonated by the actors.

Professor William Ridgeway says that as early as the time of Confucius, solemn dances were held in the ancestral temples, and even today dramatic performances take place in the temples of local deities who have been heroes or heroines in the community. These modern expressions of Chinese drama are probably descended directly from the ancient cult practiced five hundred years before Christ. Professor Ridgeway believes that tragedy originated in the worship of deified heroes.

As early as 1818 B.C. a ruler is said to have abolished the temple rites and ceremonies and to have collected a number of clowns, dwarfs, and actors to amuse the court. In the more historic period of "Spring and Autumn" (770-544 B.C.) there are records of dwarfs in roles similar to those of court fools. They often gained favor by their timely sayings of wit, tho sometimes their ready tongues led them to severe punishment.

During the Han Dynasty jugglers, magicians, rope-walkers, sword swallows, and other characters were common. Horrible masks representing gods and fierce animals, such as tigers, bears, and dragons, came in vogue. Dwarfs and giants engaged in repartee. The performance of singing girls in immodest feather costumes was censored sharply, as it would be today - (in China).

These performances, tho popular with the rulers, consisted of little that might be called drama. However, in the northern Chi Dynasty (550-570 A.D.) there arose a sort of historical play based on a true episode in the life of a warrior, Duke Lan Lu, who, because he looked slightly effeminate, wore a mask to frighten his enemies. This story dramatized is similar to the "military plays" which originated in ancient ceremonials in which the use of weapons was the striking feature. Other historical plays are recorded, also comedies taken from life.

Chinese dramas are classified according to their type of music. Mr. Wang traces several plays to central Asia or foreign countries by the style of music employed which was not indigenous to China. A non-musical type of drama flourished in the Tang Dynasty in the form of extemporized comedies. A "topical comedy with a purpose" from the Sung Dynasty (960-1126A.D.) when played before the emperor gained its desired ends. It dealt with a system of coinage introduced by an official in which the smallest coin had a value of ten cash, which was very inconvenient for the poorer classes. During the course of the play a

thirsty customer bought a drink of a vender of syrups. The merchant said there was no change for the coin which was offered, and asked his patron to take a number of drings. After the fifth or sixth cup the buyer, who had reached his limit, tapped his bulging stomach and exclaimed: "Well, I've done it at last. But if the gentlemen in the government were to make us use hundred cast coins, I should surely burst." The emperor laughed heartily, and the smaller coins were issued at once.

Mr. Wang reports the names of 280 plays from the Sung Dynasty (960-1127 A.D.) and 690 from the Chin Dynasty (1115-1234 A.D.) but does not say how many are extant.

The so-called Ancient Drama employed a certain kind of free metrical form adapted to music (ch'u). Only two actors appeared in each play, as a rule. Theatricals, tho still quite primitive, were very popular, presented both to the public in shabby mat-sheds, and to the court at elaborate feasts.

Drama, as it is seen today on the Chinese stage, did not "spring into being" until the thirteenth century with the great national distier that shook the "Middle Kingdom."

In 1264 Kublai Khan with his Mongols, placed his capitol at Peking, and the sway of the ruling literary class was broken. For the first time in history the "sons of Han" came under the rule of an alien sovereign. Naturally radical changes were made in the old literary traditions. The barbar-

ians abolished the literary examinations for government posts, and Chinese scholars were thrust out of their high offices, becoming, oftentimes, writers of petitions or lowly clerks. There was no longer any demand for them to use their literary ability in writing essays or lyrical poetry, such as had been required in the examinations which had determined their official rank, but their talents found expression in another way-- though the litterati had previously scorned this -- the drama.

For over a thousand years the classical language had been a dead language, and all literature worthy of a scholar's notice was composed in that language, so it was inevitable that the first step would be toward the democratizing of this written language, to a certain extent, by its appearing in ways that appealed to the majority of the readers and hearers. However, as Greece conquered Rome by her superior culture, so Chinese culture conquered the Mongols, and after eighty years the literary examinations were reinstated, and even the drama became formalized.

The dramatists were not known otherwise as writers of literary fame. Nine tenths of them lived in the first period of the Yuan drama (1235-1280) with Peking as its center; while the much smaller Southern School developed later (1280-1335) around Hangchow. Chinese critics regard Kuan Han-Ching as the greatest of these authors because his manner is natural and unaffected. Others are spoken of as having a style that is "lofty and magnificent, or pure and

beautiful, or biting and vigorous."

"Mr. Wang states that the Yuan drama is a natural growth out of previously existing forms and the traditional plots. More than thirty Yuan plots, he says, have been used before in plays of the Sung Dynasty. The chief difference in the Yuan drama is the appearance of more flexible verse forms for the poetic sections, and the use of more dialogue in the place of narrative and description. Thus the essence of drama, action, takes the place of narration. Moreover, the drama rose to the dignity of an art." Before this the plays had been mostly dialogues by clowns, in the midst of a miscellany of other acts consisting of juggling, acrobatics, dancing, and music. Now, instead of only two characters there were four chief ones and other minor parts. Each one of the main characters had an act in which he or she played the main role. (The construction of the play regarding plot and divisions will be taken up in another chapter). "This arrangement has had its peculiar effect which can be witnessed in present-day China where plays of this type are staged, inasmuch as a famous actor will not present entire dramas, but only such of the acts as give him the principal part." ¹

Many of our plays such as "Madame X" or "The Merchant of Venice" or "Lightnin'" have striking court scenes, but the Chinese dramatist is not to be outdone in this, for the judge's bench even more frequently figures in Chinese drama. "Many times these plays are satirical in character, making sport of the notoriously corrupt judges." This is shown

¹ Zucker, A.E., The Chinese Theatre.

by the very primitive, naive speech of introduction spoken by a judge upon entering the stage: "I am the governor of Ching-Chou. My name is Sou Shen. Although I fulfill the functions of a Judge, yet I do not know a single article of the code. I like only one thing and that is money. By means of the bright metal every plaintiff can always make sure the winning of his suit." ¹

As with Plautus or Moliere, the Chinese dramatist frequently employs the subject of the miser for a comedy character. An instance in which the subject is portrayed with typical Chinese humor and drollness may well be given here.

After several scenes in which a miser tries to buy the son of a poor scholar for almost nothing, he finally succeeds. The boy takes his place in the miser's home as a son who will be present to pray at the grave of his foster-father when old age overtakes him. The miser lectures him on every occasion on how to live economically. He illustrates how this may be done by relating a previous experience.

Feeling a desire for roast duck one day, he had gone to the market, where a fine duck was being roasted. Under pretext of bargaining, the miser handled

¹Zucker, A.E., The Chinese Theatre, p. 33.

the duck until his fingers were soaked in the delicious gravy that was running down. Then, without buying it, he returned home, and brought out a plate of boiled rice. With every spoonful of rice he sucked one finger. After the fourth finger had been sucked, he fell asleep, and a hungry dog came in and licked his last finger. This made him so angry that, upon awaking, he became violently ill. This, says the miser, was true economy.

Later, when he is on his death bed, the miser requests his adopted son to bury him in the old watering trough in the backyard, instead of buying a coffin of pine. The son protests, saying that it is too short. The miser, however, is ready for any emergency, and orders his son to cut his body in two, but to borrow the neighbor's axe to do it with, as his bones are so tough that they will dull their own axe, and necessitate the spending of a few cents to get it re-sharpened.

The miser's home is in need of a picture of the god of luck, so he has previously ordered an artist to paint a rear view, because the face costs more.

Just before he dies, he holds up two fingers, muttering inaudibly. After much difficulty his relatives discover that two candles are burning

the fact that his fingers were swollen in the delicate
fingers that were touching them. Then, without saying a word,
he returned home, and brought out a plate of boiled rice.
With every effort of mind he washed the fingers. After
the fourth finger had been washed, he felt calmer, and a
hunger for food in him licked the last finger. This was
his last night, upon arriving, he passed violently ill.
This, said the doctor, was true enough.

Later, when he is on his death bed, the doctor
examined his fingers and he found that the old swelling
was in the weakest, instead of being a swelling of
the fingers. The old swelling, saying that it is too short.
The doctor, however, is ready for any emergency, and orders
the old to get his body to rest, but he follows the doctor
and he is on his death bed, and his fingers are so swollen that
they will not touch one another, and consequently the swelling
of a few days is not to be expected.

The doctor's body is in need of a picture
of the old to look at, and he has previously ordered an
artist to paint a picture of him, because the doctor says
that before he dies, he will be able to see
himself, and that is all. After much difficulty
the artist has finished that for the doctor's picture.

where one would suffice. After one is extinguished, the old miser dies in peace.

Delicious humor, such as this, abounds in the majority of Chinese plays, especially the comedies.

Tragedy, in the Western dramatic sense, is entirely missing from Chinese drama. At least compared to plays such as Hamlet, where a height of sublimity is reached through pathos, the plays do not seem tragic. Those of the thirteenth century have a great deal of merit, although the technique is crude. The announcement of characters, with a bit of their past history, and the part to be taken by them in the play is not only prosaic, but inartistic. The action lacks proper motivation, as well as plot. Variety could be used often in place of the unvarying repetition of devices and motives.

Characterization gives way to type forms constantly, although the characters appear in large numbers from emperors to coolies.

Perhaps the main reason for this lack of the sense of tragic or sublime is the never-failing moral at the end of the play. Although this keeps the Chinese play from rising to noble heights, in one respect, it also lends it an irresistible charm. This almost ridiculous turn at the end of so many otherwise

serious plays is typically Chinese. Producing the unexpected from the expected is part of the naïvety of Chinese drama. A deep insight into Chinese character and life in the Middle Kingdom before the Ming Dynasty is thus revealingly portrayed on the Chinese stage.¹

The Yuan Dynasty of Mongol rulers was overthrown by an uprising of the Chinese under the leadership of an abbot, the Jishi-Teich, and the Ming Dynasty was founded. The abbot succeeded the throne in 1368, and was known as Emperor Hsiao-Ti.

The Ming Dynasty was one of prosperity. Industry, commerce, and the arts of poetry and painting flourished. Consequently it was also a fruitful period for the drama. Over 500 Ming dramas are to be found today, many having been written by well-known authors of high literary standing. Their plots revolved around the lives of the aristocracy and the middle class, with scenes of action, which played a very important part in the drama. The audience was composed of highly educated, intelligent Chinese, and the language of the plays would be of literary merit.

The form of drama began to change noticeably at

¹ Zucker, A.E., The Chinese Theatre, p. 42.

Chapter II

The Later Conditions and Development of the Chinese Drama

The Yuan Dynasty of Mongol rulers was overthrown by an uprising of the Chinese under the leadership of an ex-monk, Chu-Yuan-Chang, and the Ming Dynasty was founded. The ex-monk ascended the throne in 1368, and was known as Emperor Hung-Wu.

The Ming Dynasty was one of prosperity. Industry, commerce, and the arts of poetry and painting flourished. Consequently it was also a fruitful period for the drama. Over 600 Ming dramas are in existence today, many having been written by well-known authors of high literary standing. Many high officials and wealthy families had private troupes of actors, with dramas written especially for them to act. Since the audiences were composed of highly educated, intelligent Chinese, the language of the plays could be of literary merit.

The form of drama began to change noticeably at this time. Instead of the compact and unified three, four,

and five act plays of the Yuan period, the playwrights began to produce dramas of thirty-two, forty, or even forty-eight acts. This new form is ch'an ch'i -- literally "novel". The plays of the Yuan were called tsa ch'i. Dr. Hu Shih suggests that the former be called "play" and the latter "drama", to distinguish between them.

The Ming plays were superior in (1) profounder conception, (2) better characterization, (3) more even distribution of parts among the characters.

A revival of Confucian ideals, as shown by the drama, was typical of the Ming Dynasty. The drama of this period is not clear cut, but is full of Chinese moralizing along very different lines than that of the "practical Westerner".

Filial piety plays a large part in Chinese drama. Confucius laid it down as the most "laudable institution in existence", and a Westerner can understand why the Chinese consider such things good living standards when he stops to think that it represents one of the bases of Chinese society which has survived

Egyptian, Babylonian, Persian, Roman, and other civilizations.¹

In 1644 a rebel army entered the Chinese capitol, the last of the Ming Emperors committed suicide, and the throne went to a Manchu leader who had been called in to help put down the rebellion. During the reigns of K'ang Hsi (1662-1723) and Ch'ien Lung (1736-1795) literature, the arts, drama, all flourished to such an extent that it has been called the most glorious period of Chinese history. Over 815 plays of literary merit are recorded in a recently published catalogue as products of the Ch'ing Dynasty.

Two historical tragedies were written about the beginning of the eighteenth century which have become famous. These are "The Blood-stained Fan", by Kung Shang-jen, and "The Palace of Eternal Life", by Hung Sen. The latter is about the well-beloved Yang-Kuei-fei, about whom there have been no less than fifty plays written, to say nothing of poems and ballads. Ming Huang and Yang Kuei-fei have for years been the popular characters of Chinese plays, and their beautiful and tragic love story has been given many variations.

¹ The Chinese Theatre, Zucker, p. 67.

It is said that Yang Kuei-fei had intrigued with a noble named An Lu Shan, who declared war on the Emperor Ming Huang with the hope of obtaining possession of her. The Emperor accordingly assembled a large army and, accompanied by Yang Kuei-fei, went to meet the noble.

Upon arriving at a place called Ma-kuei in Szechuen, the Emperor's troops mutinied, declaring that Yang Kuei-fei was the cause of the rebellion, and demanding her life, or refusing to fight. The Emperor was forced to comply. Some accounts state that he ordered her strangled by his soldiers. Others say that she strangled herself. This appears to be the correct version. Some of the ballads describing this are very pathetic and beautiful.

Hence any dramatized form of this Chinese idyll meets with much enthusiasm on the part of a Chinese audience. "The Palace of Eternal Life" gives many opportunities for a variety of dramatic situations from military conflict to graceful dances by Yang Kuei-fei, with mournful soliloquies in song.

A much cruder, less melodious type of music followed, the native music of the Ch'ing Dynasty. Many of the better plays disappeared with the older music. Sometimes "military" plays took their place amidst wild crashing of the orchestra, in the inimitable Chinese fashion. By the end of the Ch'in Dynasty the Yuan drama had almost disappeared from the Peking stage.

During the Manchu rule, popular novels influenced the drama greatly. The novel, like the drama, though despised by the pundits, was very popular among the masses, and began to flourish during the Mongol Dynasty when the literary examinations were suppressed. Many of the novels are of unknown authorship because authors were ashamed to admit that they would write anything so far below their dignity.

"The Story of the Three Kingdoms" is by far the most popular at the present time. It was written in the Yuan Dynasty and deals with the period of romantic chivalry from 221-265. An endless number of plays are based on this book, which well deserves to be called the national epic of the Chinese.

"The Dream of the Red Chamber" is another popular novel.

"The Three Strange Meetings" is a well-liked comedy written during the Manchu Dynasty. It is one of the favorite plays of Mei-Lan-fang, of whom more will be said later. The play gives significant glimpses of Chinese life, and is full of good opportunities for Chinese "stars" to do some real acting.

About one-fourth of the drama played in China at the present time deals with religious or mythological subjects. Kuan-yin, the well-beloved Goddess of Mercy, the Buddhist Madonna, is a very popular figure in these plays. In direct contrast to her is shown the cruel judge of the lower world.

A favorite example of the mythological drama is the story of "The Black and White Snake", which was taken from a novel. It is the story of two snake demons who took the form of lovely virgins. One day they quarreled, and in agreement to a wager a fight was held in which the triumphant one should be the mistress of the other. The White Snake won, so the Black Snake became her servant. The White Snake decided to reward a young man, Hsü Hsüan, who had saved her life in a previous incarnation, by

offering to become his wife. Unfortunately for her, however, her husband gave her some wine, according to Chinese custom, on the fifth day of the fifth month. The lotion is supposed to contain a certain blossom which acts as a charm against venomous animals. Imagine the husband's terror, on parting the curtains of their bed, to see a huge white snake coiled there, ready to strike and spewing fire! He immediately fell dead of fright. The Black Snake woke her mistress who, on awakening, took on human form, and was heart-broken to discover what she had done. She heard, however, that on the mountain dominated by the God of Long Life there grew an herb which brought the dead back to life. Consequently after many hardships she obtained the herb and restored her husband to life. The two snake demons tried so hard to please him that they brought harm to the village thru their efforts. The treasurer was beheaded because they robbed the treasury to enrich their favorite. They opened a drug store and caused various diseases in the neighborhood to make their business "boom."

Finally, an abbot of a nearby monastery warned Hsü Hsüan of the evil demons in his home, and persuaded him to take refuge in the monastery.

The White and Black Snake demons followed him there, and many demonstrations of magic on their part and on the part of the abbot were performed, but to no avail. Finally, upon the White Snake's confession that she was to have a child, Hsü Hsuan came home, because the God of Science and Literature had sent a messenger to say that their son of the White Snake and Hsü Hsuan was destined to obtain the highest degree in the literary examinations. After the son was born, the two demons were abducted by the god Wen Chang to his magic pagoda, and Hsü Hsuan was left in wistful happiness with his promising young son.

This play is full of imaginative appeal, and one can see how it would hold a Chinese audience spell-bound for hours.

"Chang-o's Visit to the Moon" is another favorite play at the present time, in which fairies play an important part, and many beautiful and graceful dances are brought in, especially if Mei Lan-fang takes the leading part.

Chapter III

General Characteristics of the Chinese Theatre.

It has been said that a Chinese play is "a sort of dance, animated by various sentiments, accompanied by song and dialogue, and executed to the sound of music."¹ Certainly to the ear of the uninitiated it seems at first to be a harsh combination of clanging and clashing cymbals and drums, shrill flute, and the sharp voices of penetrating stringed instruments. Above all this one hears a peculiar monotone which he recognizes as the human voice. The music seems to be an accompaniment to a queer sort of kaleidoscopic action in Elizabethan style that is going on before one's eyes.

Before one decides with finality that the scene is unmusical, unaesthetic, and unpleasant, let him be sure that he is not judging entirely from a Western viewpoint, for the standard of dramatic perfection in the Orient differs radically from that set by the Occidental critic. One sees in Chinese drama the traditions and moral teachings which have guided Chinese thought in the same direction for centuries. To judge fairly the Chinese theatre, one must shake himself loose from all Western prejudices which find him, and become an Oriental

¹ The Chinese Theatre, Chu-Chia-Chien, p. 36

in the first stages of learning. He must look and listen with the sympathetic insight of a soul saturated with the simplicity and wisdom of Confucius' teachings. Every fantastic movement, every superstitious reference will then have a meaning for him, and the true significance of the Chinese theatre for the people who have given it such a prominent place in their lives for centuries will suddenly dawn on his consciousness. He will realize that although the principle of the sage's teachings: "Ever think of your ancestors and cultivate virtue," may have kept this great race from progress, it has also kept it from decay.

A true appreciation of the dramatic art which has done more than any other art to preserve this moral criterion will make impossible misunderstandings and wrong conceptions of the radically different form of presentation seen on the Chinese stage. Although Elizabethan in its primitive simplicity, the Chinese theatre is indigenous, and, therefore, to be fully appreciated, must be judged by native standards.

The theatre is one of the most democratic of all Chinese institutions. All classes of people are portrayed on the stage, and all classes come to watch the acting. No celebration is quite complete without some kind of a dramatic presentation, whether the occasion be a procession in honor of some deity, a festival to honor the birthday of an ancestor,

Studies in Chinese Drama, 1911, pp. 25-26

Chinese Drama, William S. Atkinson, p. 11

or a dozen other festivities. The dramatic instinct of the Chinese seems to be one of his most outstanding qualities.

There are several different classifications of Chinese plays. One is the division into three general classes. Of these, Vun Pan Shi is the oldest form. It deals with patriotism and filial devotion. The Jin Pan Shi, or second type, are plays presenting civil and military life. They differ from the first type of plays not in the libretto, but in the tradition of acting and manner of singing. Civil plays are of a farcical nature, and deal with the domestic complications of every day life, while military plays portray historical incidents and acts of filial devotion. These are both very popular with the Chinese audience, especially the latter type.

The third type of play is the Vun Min Shi, or "modern" play, in which colloquial dialects are permitted instead of the Mandarin, or classical language.¹

Mr. William Stanton divides Chinese drama into the Cheng-pan, or historical plays, the Chu-tou, or civil plays, and the Ku-Wei, or farces.²

Chinese plays cannot be divided, however, into the

1. Studies in Chinese Drama, Kate Buss, pp. 20-22

2. Chinese Drama, William Stanton, p. 11

usual division of comedies and tragedies, for although there are so-called tragedies or "sorrowful plays", as they are sometimes called, the tears of the audience are quickly dispelled by the humorous scene which quickly follows a sad one, as in our melodramas of today. There is a realistic gruesomeness about many of the plays, but none of the subtlety of Western drama, and one never feels the sense of tragedy, as has been mentioned before. This is probably because of the conventionalized action which tradition has long claimed shall hold back the actors from doing much original characterizations. The conventions must be observed.

The direct source of the majority of Chinese plays is the historical novel, which serves as a "kind of mediary between history and the stage." There is a Chinese novel for practically every period of history, so much interesting material is found for the dramas. Many of these novels are masterpieces which the Chinese love to read or have read to them by the hour. An example is San-kuo-yen-yi, (The Story of the Three Kingdoms).

The main principle which stands out in all of these historical novels, according to Mr. Chu-Chia-Chien, is "Right is greater than might." This ideal is accordingly reflected on the stage, hence the good is always rewarded and the bad is always punished. The Chinese audience looks for and expects such consequences on the stage, and they would resent any innovations except in rare instances.

To the average Chinese, a play is not created merely to entertain or amuse, it must promote the moral education of society. For this reason, a play cannot be given for the sake of the play. It must have a moral. The dialogue must be flavored with the highly moralizing philosophy of Confucius or Mencius, or it is a failure. A departure from the traditional type of play in a portrayal of human weaknesses and defects would not be tolerated. The Chinese so values a good reputation and lives in such fear of "losing face" that consequently he cannot bear the thought of holding others up to ridicule. He resents unfair criticism and exaggerated facts. Even the actors, who, until the present time, have been despised and looked down upon as a class, will not, as a rule, lower their "personal integrity" by appearing in the part of a bad character. Many actors would consider such a request as an insult.

This appreciation of, and emphasis placed upon, moral virtue, however, did not solemnize the Chinese characteristic love for a good laugh. As a people, they are a kindly, good-natured lot, instinctively humorous, and their droll satirical expressions find way into even the most staid, historical dramas. It has been said that "even the lines of their architecture turn up like a smiling mouth, and as entertainment they prefer to laugh than to cry." ¹

1.

Studies in Chinese Drama, Kate Buss, p. 22

Although the plays with the most "enduring qualities" have featured historical events, others seen as frequently include a variety of subjects, such as filial and parental piety, the exaltation of learning, vices common to mankind, and peculiarities of official corruption, legal anomalies, and the absurdity of religious practices and many others.

Concerning the historical plays Dr. Arthur Smith says that the representation of historical events may be said to be one of the greatest obstacles to the acquisition of knowledge by the common people, for they do not read history, but depend on this knowledge to come through the plays. Theatricals, however, are not noted for their historical accuracy, for most of them are so adapted that they will give the greatest dramatic effect. Hence the people are, as a whole, very much confused as to the exact facts of historical events, for they forget the dull history, but remember the plays because they are entertaining.¹

Chinese plays, in addition to the amusement which they offer, are supposed oftentimes to please certain deities so that good fortune may visit the community in the shape of one of the five blessings for which the Chinese pray, namely, sons, riches, long life, recovery from sickness, and office. Other petitions are that crops shall be plentiful, and that men and beasts shall be immune from cholera.²

¹ Dr. Arthur H. Smith, *Village Life in China*, p. 66.

² Buss, Kate, *Studies in Chinese Drama*, p. 23.

Strange to say, there are scarcely any permanent theatre buildings, for the most part. Performances are given in temples, private dwellings, the streets in front of particular shops to benefit trade, or along the roadside on stages erected before idols they wish to honor. Wealthy families often have a temporary stage erected in a large interior court. A vacant plot of ground often holds a community stage. The expenses are borne by a temple, show, family, or community which contracts for the plays.

Although Chinese theatres necessarily vary in different parts of China, and change slightly from year to year, there are two prevailing types of theatres, in which the traditional form of acting remains much the same. They are the temporary, or "mat-shed" theatres, and the permanent theatres of the larger cities.

The "mat-sheds" are by far the most common ones, and may be found in almost any part of China. They are temporary structures of mats and bamboo poles, and may be erected in a few hours from the material which each traveling company carries. No Chinese village is too small to have at least one annual series of performances in one of these theatres. In larger towns, every festivity or procession has its accompanying theatricals. Almost every man, woman, and child in the vicinity will crowd to the scene of activity if given the opportunity.

...to say, there are certainly any ...
...the buildings, for the most part. ...
...in temples, private dwellings, the streets in front of ...
...closer to the temple, or along the road on ...
...steps erected before which they wish to pass. Wealthy families ...
...often have a temporary stage erected in a large ...
...a vacant part of ground often holds a community stage. The ...
...exposed are borne by a temple, wall, railing, or community ...
...which contrasts for the stage.

Although Chinese theatres necessarily vary in ...
...different parts of China, and change slightly from year to ...
...year, there are two prevailing types of theatres, in which the ...
...traditional form of acting remains much the same. They are ...
...the temporary, or "pop-up" theatres, and the permanent ...
...theatres of the larger cities.

The "pop-up" type is by far the most common ...
...one, and may be found in almost any part of China. They ...
...are temporary structures of wattle and bamboo poles, and may ...
...be erected in a few hours from the material which is ...
...traveling company carries. No Chinese village is too small ...
...to have at least one small stage of performance in one of ...
...these theatres. In larger towns, every festival or procession ...
...is the accompaniment of theatricals. Almost every man, woman, ...
...and child in the vicinity will expect to see some of ...
...it gives the opportunity.

"Mat-shed" theatres"include a stage, a green-room, several loges (boxes) in which seats are placed, and usually, pavillions in which tea and sweets are sold. The majority of the spectators stand or sit upon the ground close to the stage, and remain sometimes for half a dozen hours without apparently tiring of the acrobatic tumbling, the grotesque humor, and the military manoeuvres that the performances offer."¹

Even if the village where the play is being put on is a very small one, the bustle caused by the entrance of the theatrical troupe, and the putting up of the theatre is considerable. The general appearance is that of a large fair. Various smaller mat-sheds are put up at a little distance from the theatre itself, for cook-shops, gambling booths, tea-shops, and the like. The general impression made upon the village people as a whole is interesting from a social point of view, for everything is subordinated to this theatrical festivity.

Relatives from all the neighboring villages begin to swarm upon the homes of the villagers, whether welcome or not, and declare their intentions of staying the entire period of the celebration. There is much show of elaborate hospitality on the part of those being visited, although there is no doubt that they are most imposed upon.

1.

Studies in Chinese Drama, Kate Buss, p. 72

The village theatricals are generally financed by some rich man who regards the project as an investment. Sometimes a man may put his capital in the costumes, and important part of the Chinese theatre. He is then called the "Master of the Chest". Different groups of people may lease the entire outfit, which they are obliged to keep in good condition.

The permanent theatres are found only in the larger cities, such as Peking and Shanghai. Their architecture is quite simple. The vestibule door opens into the main auditorium, which, like the stage, is rectangular in shape. The stage which faces the entrance is about six feet high, railed in with a red and good wooden balustrade. At each side is a red column covered with poetry in gilt letters. These columns are about thirty feet high, and support a sort of dais which forms a roof over the stage. The two traditional doors, the right for entrance, the left for exit, are closed by silk embroidered curtains which are covered by small, highly polished mirrors. The wall at the back is also covered with silk embroidery and small mirrors.

The stage is carpeted, and contains a number of chairs, benches, cushions, tables, and the like, which are to be used as properties. There is no curtain on the Chinese stage, so these properties will be placed in position, as they are needed, in full view of the audience, in much the same

manner as in the days of Queen Elizabeth.

The roof is flat, with a raised centre, which serves as a skylight. Several tiers of galleries run around three sides of the theatre. The first tier contains boxes which ordinarily seat five or six people, although more may crowd in without any objections on the part of the management. The poorest spectators sit in lateral galleries on the ground floor. Two wooden staircases on either side lead up to the gallery over the entrance, which also contains boxes. The space between the doors and the stage, called cheu-dze, is filled with tables and chairs, and benches.

The Chinese audience has a freedom which a European or American audience can scarcely comprehend. The spectators smoke, drink tea, eat cakes, watermelon seeds, sweets, and oftentimes a whole meal while the play is going on. Oftentimes such animated conversations and laughter take place in the boxes that the actors cannot be heard at all above the hubbub. After two or three hours of entertainment the hot wet towels are seen flying thru the air between the waiters to revive a drowsy patron. Tea is served continually, even to the actors themselves, if they have long, difficult parts.

Ideals of sanitation and comfort, with which the Westerner is familiar, are not present in the Chinese theatre.

... as in the days of Queen Elizabeth.
The roof is flat, with a raised centre, which serves
as a skylight. Several tiers of galleries run around three
sides of the theatre. The first tier contains boxes which or-
dinarily seat five or six people. Although more may crowd in
without any objection on the part of the management. The
lowest galleries sit in lateral galleries on the ground floor.
The wooden staircase on either side lead up to the gallery over
the entrance, which also contains boxes. The space between the
boxes and the stage, called the box, is filled with tables
and chairs, and benches.
The Chinese audience has a freedom which a
European or American audience has scarcely competent. The
spectators smoke, drink tea, eat cakes, whatever needs,
and often times a whole meal while they play is going
on. Unrestrained and animated conversation and laughter take
place in the boxes that the actors cannot be heard at all above
the noise. After the first hour of entertainment the box
and people are very lively and the air between the actors to
receive a noisy reaction. As is to be expected, even to
the actors themselves, if they have long, difficult parts.
There is no excitement and comfort, with which the
spectator is familiar, are not present in the Chinese theatre.

It is unheated, unventilated, and ill-smelling. The chairs have no backs, and cold stones serve as footstools even in zero weather.

A curtain or screen is hung behind the entrance gate to hide the stage from curious passersby. To the right is the "box-office" where theatre patrons may exchange bank-notes, deposit valuables, and the like. Tickets are bought here rarely, however, because the admission fee is not taken up until the performance is half over, and the persons who are not interested in the acting have had time to leave.

Until recently, the admission has not been more than twenty-five cents in the permanent theatres. At present however an actor of such fame as Mei-Leng-Fan can raise the price as much as eight times.

The ushers' quarter is to the left of the entrance. Here are stored the refreshments sold during the performance. Hats and coats, for which the ushers are held responsible, are checked here, and in some theatres this room may contain the hot water tub for towels.

In most Chinese theatres the ladies are seated in separate boxes, where they may display to advantage their jewels and other attractions.

A large room directly back of the stage is known as the green room. This is a most interesting jumble of properties, make-up materials, costumes, and everything else used on

It is unusual, unexcited, and ill-mannered. The only one
to notice, and only one who is not in the
middle.

A certain amount of time is spent in the
middle of the stage from the beginning. In the right
the "middle" where the actors are not in the
middle of the stage, and the middle. The actors are not in the
middle, because the middle is not taken up until the
performance is half over, and the middle is not in the
middle of the stage, and the middle is not in the
middle.

There is, however, the middle of the stage, and the middle
of the stage is not in the middle of the stage. At present
there is an actor of the middle of the stage, and the middle
of the stage is not in the middle of the stage.

The middle of the stage is in the middle of the stage.
There is a middle of the stage, and the middle of the stage
is not in the middle of the stage, and the middle of the stage
is not in the middle of the stage, and the middle of the stage
is not in the middle of the stage.

In most cases, the middle of the stage is not in the
middle of the stage, where they are not in the middle of the
stage, and the middle of the stage is not in the middle of the
stage.

A large room directly back of the stage is known
as the green room. This is a most interesting place of interest
to the audience, and everything else used on
the stage.

the stage. No visitor is allowed here without a special permit. The leading actors have their private dressing rooms, but for the minor characters the greenroom serves as both dressing room and property room. Spears, swords, helmets, wigs, false-beards, and the like, hang about on the walls. Boots and costumes lie about in boxes. Make-up stands and tables are scattered about the room, with their interesting variety of paint brushes and colors.

Tea is also served here, amid the hubbub of the gambling, smoking, crowd. Each has his own seat, a large painted box containing his belongings. According to Mr. Chu-Chia-Chien, only the comedians, who are allowed special privileges, are permitted to jest here, and should an actor playing the part of a woman of questionable character, sit down upon some one else's box he should be "called-down" severely by the others. This is one of the superstitions of the stage, and the unlucky victim feels that certainly a dire calamity will soon befall him!

Another custom or rule applies to the actors who impersonate emperors. They are the only ones of the troupe who may legitimately sit on the "big clothes box" which is owned by a prominent member of the troupe.

Near the two entrances stand the "waste-paper basket" players, who take a variety of minor parts, appearing in all performances of the play. These players get only one

the stage. No visitor is allowed here without a special permit.
The leading actors have their private dressing rooms, but for
the minor characters the dressing rooms are more numerous.
The rooms are arranged in a long row, and each room has a
wardrobe, and the linen, hang about on the walls. Books and cos-
tumes lie about in boxes. Make-up stands and tables are
arranged about the room, with their interesting variety of
paint brushes and colors.

It is a very noisy place, and the hubbub of
the washing, mending, drying, and ironing, is a large
feature of the life here. According to Mr.
The-Globe, only the women, who are allowed special
privileges, are permitted to go to the stage, and should be
playing the part of a woman of questionable character, all down
upon some one else's part as should be "called-down" severely
by the critics. This is one of the superstitions of the stage,
and the actress who feels that certainly a fine actress
will soon be left.

Another custom is that applied to the actors
the legitimate business. They are the only ones of the
troupe who may be admitted to the "back stage-box"
which is used by a prominent member of the troupe.
Near the box entrance stands the "passage"
where the actors, who take a variety of minor parts, appearing
in all parts of the play. These players get only one

dollar for a performance, compared to three or five hundred dollars earned by the leading artist.

The other actors lounge about, trying to steal a nap on their property boxes before they go on, or mumble their parts to themselves as they put on the last smear of make-up. Some very ludicrous sights are seen in the green-room, such as mythological beasts with the bodies of men, or a daintily made-up and wigged Chinese gentlewoman in man's attire. Or a man may be lying about with only the upper half of his face painted because he intends to wear a false beard on the other half.

The green-room shows many of the Chinese traditions and conventions which have clung to the stage for centuries. It can be compared to no foreign scene of interest, for it is uniquely, characteristically Chinese.

Ordinarily, a program consists of eight or ten plays, given continuously. There are two performances, usually, the afternoon matinee running from about one to six, while the evening one lasts from seven till midnight. According to custom, the best players appear at the end of the program, so the fashionable theatre-goers do not appear until about ten in the evening. They, however, are in the minority, as most of the spectators come early and watch, or make a pretense of watching, the amateurs who are thus en-

12

...for a performance, compared to those of 1944...

...the latter named by the leading artist.

The other actors lounge about, trying to seem

...as they are their property boxes before they go on, or make their

...to themselves as they sit on the last row of seats.

Good very loud and noisy as the green-room, 1900 as

...with the bodies of men, or a faintly

...and a slight change in the air.

...only the upper half of his face

...to see a faint head on the other

side.

The green-room shows many of the Chinese...

...which have been in the stage for

...It can be compared to an foreign scene of inter-

...but it is uniquely, characteristically Chinese.

Originally, a group of eight or

...There are two performers.

...the afternoon and the evening show are in

...the evening one lasts from seven till midnight.

...the best players appear at the end of

...the program, so the audience is not disappointed

...They, however, are in the

...as most of the spectators come early and early, or

...the audience who are late or

couraged and developed in the dramatic arts. Sometimes a new actor of marked ability is brought into prominence by a wealthy patron, who pays an extra amount of money for a special performance of his favorite after the regular program.

The theatre is open to all, but the middle-class mercants compose most of the crowd. Generally speaking, the audience is sympathetic, sincere, and enthusiastic. They do not show approval by clapping, but shout "how" (good), or, if the play has not pleased them, they shout "tung" (rotten).

Sometimes, when a good play has not been acted well, the audience will demand ^{that} the actors do it over again. If they are very irate they may throw the teapots or stools upon the stage, but this is very rare, for the Chinese are generally patient and long-suffering. In case this happens, a refund of the admission price is demanded.

The Chinese audience does not like a show of partiality, and if a prince or high official cries "how" to show favoritism, he is "tunged" by even his own friends and servants.

The program of the Chinese theatre is varied from day to day. It may be historical, domestic, military, or farcical, but every play must teach a moral, and with the exception of the historical play, must end happily.

...and developed in the dramatic art. ...
...of which ability is shown in the ...
...and says an entire ...
...of his ...

The ... is ...
... of the ...
... is ...
... by ...
... about "long" ...

... when a ...
... the ...
... they are very ...
... upon the ...
... in ...
... a ...

The Chinese audience does not like a show of ...
... and is ...
... is ...

The ... of the Chinese theatre is ...
... It may be ...
... and with the ...
... of the historical play, ...

In the Peking school theatres, the plays are preceded by a pantomime scene, T'iao-Chia-kuan, (Dance of Chia-kuan). The mimic wears a white mask, and in the garb of an antique dignitary, executes a dance to music. By gesticulations he bids the audience welcome. This act is purely traditional, and is not seen on the program. The first play is seldom of interest. It is merely a short "curtain-raiser". The real program begins with the second piece.

As a rule, Chinese programs are well arranged, with comedy followed by tragedy, and music interspersed with action, so a variety will keep the plays from becoming monotonous.

The following is a typical Chinese program, with a brief analysis of each number:

1. The Happy Family.- (As has been stated, this is not of great interest, but is an attractive spectacle from the viewpoint of elaborate costumes. It is a mythological scene, in which appear the gods long-life, riches, honor, etc.

2. The Marriage of a Fool - (A farce which amuses the audience.)

3. The Young Widow in the Cemetery - (This is not a sad story, but a merry intrigue, in which a wife builds a tomb for her husband, whom she weeps for as lost. He returns as governor, hears of her devotion, to his great joy, and makes himself known. The play ends in a merry dance.

4. An Acrobatic Scene.

5. The Sacrifice on the Blue River. (An historical play, the chief interest of which is the music and singing.

6. The Secret Return of General Yang to his Mother. - (A war episode of the Song period, showing filial piety and its reward.

7. Shui-Lein-tong - (A mythological play in which one sees the gods give battle to a genii, with the body of a monkey.)

4. An historical scene.

5. The battles on the Blue River. (An historical

play, the chief interest of which is the heroic and religious

6. The heroic deeds of General King to the Westward.

(A very episode of the long career, showing little play and

its reward.

7. The hair-tong - (A psychological play in which one

man and horse give battle as a giant, with the help of a

monster.)

Chapter IV

Inner Aspects of the Chinese Theatre

The Chinese actor, as a rule, is not held in the same esteem as were the actors in ancient Greece, who, as a class, uplifted the morals of the people. On the contrary, up until the present time, actors were regarded as the lowest class, and were despised and scorned by those of the higher classes. In China today a few actors and actresses of good morals and marked ability have raised the standard somewhat. The majority, however, are of humble origin, and lead lives of dissipation. Many of them are victims of opium-smoking, and nothing but the masks of paint worn by them could ever cover their pallid, sallow faces.

In China there are no schools which teach singing, elocution, and dancing, so the older actors take it upon themselves to train young boys to go on the stage. In the southern part of China, even today, the youths look forward to a stage career, serve an apprenticeship of six or seven years. Most of them are bought outright from their parents, while the rest are picked up in foundling homes. The discipline is very strict, and the training so severe that oftentimes the general health of the pupil is seriously impaired. He has to learn dozens

of different roles, besides exercise in acrobatics and dancing, and strenuous labor of various kinds to toughen his nerves, increase his strength, and prepare him for the future career of acting. Although his discipline is so severe, and his diet frugal, he must pay his master for these years of training by giving him the larger percent of his earnings for a number of years after he starts his career. Eventually, every actor purchases his own freedom, either through his own efforts, or the efforts of a wealthy patron who is interested.

In the imperial times, the son of almost any poor man could rise to the position of an official by passing the difficult literary examinations. Not so with the actor, however. He was not even permitted to try to take them, and if he did pass them under an assumed name, his honors were taken away from him. Since the discontinuance of these impractical tests of classical knowledge in 1907, the condition has been somewhat simplified, although it will be years before the actor succeeds in living down his traditional reputation.

When a wealthy host hires a group of actors for an evening's entertainment, tradition in etiquette demands that one of them presents to the guests a book in which the titles of several dozens of plays have

been written. After the list has been examined by the honored guests, the pieces containing the name of anyone of them is immediately rejected, for even the slight association with those in the acting profession has for years been taboo in China, according to social tradition. The actor associates only with his own class.

During the reign of the Mongol emperors, women appeared on the stage until Emperor K'ien-long took one for a concubine. After that, they were forbidden to be seen acting until 1900. As a general thing, men have taken the parts of women on the stage, and very creditably.

There was a women's theatre in Shanghai, however, called Mau-eul-hi or "theatre of cats" in which even the male parts were taken by women. Critics have said that a cast composed solely of men is not nearly so incongruous as one composed of women, so this kind of theatre has never been as popular as that in which the male actors take all the parts.

The superstitious nature of actors as a class is shown by the fact that offerings of perfume and other things are made to an idol called Lang-lang-poo-sa, who is traditionally supposed to be venerated as a divinity protecting the actor's corporation. It is said by some

been written. After the list has been examined by the
proper person, the names appearing in the list of names
of those to be admitted are sent, for each of them
separately, to the person in the office of the
person in charge of the list, according to the position
the person occupies with the list.

During the time of the Kangai epidemic, some
appeared on the list until January 1, 1900, and
for a number of days after that, they were forbidden to go
into the city until 1900. As a general rule, men have
been the first to come on the scene, and very carefully
there was a woman's name in the list, however.

After the epidemic of 1900, it was found that
the names were taken of women. Before the epidemic
a great number of names of men is not nearly so numerous
now as the number of women, so this kind of names has
never been so popular as it is since the epidemic
and all the people.

The epidemic of 1900 was a class
is known by the fact that offerings of medicine and other
things are made to an idol called Kangai-ang-ang, who
is traditionally supposed to be venerated as a deity
protecting the people's organization. It is said by some

authorities to be a figure of the Emperor Chuang-tsong, a patron of the stage, who was murdered by an actor. Many actors make an annual pilgrimage to Miao Feng Shan, a mountain three days journey from Peking, which is the traditional shrine where actors may worship.

The life of an actor is drudgery, with its long matinee and evening performance. Each actor has his own musician assigned to him who rehearses with him and accompanies him at performances. Violent jealousies are not uncommon among such a tempermental class as actors, and oftentimes their food is cooked by their families and brought to them to prevent poisoning by one of the other actors.

With the one exception of a rule forbidding the impersonation of a reigning emperor during the imperialistic government, practically no restrictions have been placed on dramatic presentations. A theatre may be started by almost anyone, with no censure of plays or characters acting the parts. The stage manager hires the troupe, and gives them full play. Rehearsals with a director are almost unheard of in most Chinese theatres.

An actor need not hesitate to change his lines to suit the occasion. Oftentimes a humorous situation evolves from this freedom. When the songs and dialogue of an old play are familiar to an audience, the actors may be demanded to conform to tradition in reproducing the parts.

The actors allow themselves great freedom in the farces, especially when it comes to introducing "old gags" and "new hits". Current happenings of the day may thus be referred to, and if we may judge their popularity by the way "local hits" are received on the American vaudeville stage we may judge them to be something of a success.

When a new play is being introduced, a manuscript outlining the scenes in their order, with all entrances and exits, is posted behind the stage door. A number of experienced actors can form a troupe, each having a repertoire of some twenty to a hundred plays in which he can play the leading roles. There must be one to take women's parts, another must be a historical player, another a sword dancer, several others especially talented in acrobatics, and so on, until the company numbers about one hundred. Then they can travel from place to place filling special appointments.

As soon as the audience is seated, the lights are dimmed and the music begins. The actors enter from the wings and take their places on the stage. The action begins with the first scene. The actors play their parts with skill and energy. The audience is interested in the story and the characters. The play continues with several more scenes. The actors play their parts with skill and energy. The audience is interested in the story and the characters. The play ends with a final scene. The actors play their parts with skill and energy. The audience is interested in the story and the characters.

The more versatile an actor is, the surer he is of success. Talent along the lines of singing, elocution, dancing, mimicry, all are essential to the actor. Singing is particularly a desirable gift, and requires special training. The human voice on the Chinese stage has an artificial quality unknown anywhere else. The voices of men and women alike range from alto to high soprano. Most of the singing is done in falsetto, consequently the lower registers are not touched.

Dancing is also indispensable to the Chinese of artistic accomplishments. He must know the light, airy, graceful movements of the pastoral ballet, also the swift, violent whirls and stampings of the warlike dance, which is a combination of fencing, boxing and fighting.

Elocutionary faults have interesting names. For instance, "to eat snails" means to substitute meaningless words in a song; "pour water" is to replace one word by another; "three legs" means to omit a word, and "shoot the arrow" refers to the voice breaking on a high note.

There are several classes of actors. One is the permanent theatre group who appear only in a few large cities; another is the temporary group of players who perform in temples in cities and villages; the

The more versatile an actor is, the more he is
of course. Talent along the lines of singing, dancing,
dramatic, etc., all are essential to the actor. Sing-
ing is particularly a desirable gift, and naturally ac-
quired. The higher value on the Chinese stage has an
artistic quality unknown anywhere else. The volume of
sound and voice which comes from the high soprano
part of the singing is heard in the distance, consequently
the lower registers are not needed.

Dancing is also indispensable to the Chinese of
artistic accomplishment. He must know the light, airy,
graceful movements of the beautiful ballet, also the
swift, violent whirls and stampings of the warlike dance,
which is a combination of leaping, kicking and fighting.
Elementary facts have interesting names.

For instance, "to act well" means to rehearse meaning-
less words in a long "long water" is to repeat the
word by himself; "short legs" means to omit a word,
and "short the actor" refers to the voice breaking on
a high note.

There are several classes of actors. One is
the permanent theatre group who appear only in a few
large cities; another is the temporary group of players
who perform in temples in cities and villages; the

Grass Stage players who appear on a stage built on the grass of villages, the River and Canal actors who live upon boats, using them as the stage itself, while the audience gathers on a river bank; the Speaking Books, or solitary players who appear in restaurants and tea houses to sing and tell stories. Others are the travelling actors, including the master of a trick monkey, the strolling musicians, and others, who chant historical episodes and adventures upon a bridge or street corner. As a class, these last are despised, and have not even the comradeship of their own kind.

The social position of the Chinese actor is depending more and more upon his personal integrity and success. Tan-Shen-peï received in 1901 the title of Manchu of Beile, which corresponds to baron or viscount. Tchreng-Tehang-Keng wears a decoration of the fifth rank, his sons are governors of the department. Wang-You-Tchren is former major of infantry. The fortunes of these men explain to some extent the respect in which they are held.

The names of great actors of the past are almost unknown. There are only a limited number of modern ones who have won national reputations. A few should be mentioned here:

T'an-Shen-peí, who died in 1917 at the age of seventy-five, was so rich and powerful an actor that on three occasions he flatly refused to act before the Empress Dowager. He played the parts of a noble father and military counsellor. He was seen often in Shanghai at the Sinn-Wu-trae.

Wang Fong-tsing, Yu-Tchen-ting, Yang Hsiao-Lou and Wang You-Tehren are some other famous actors of the present time.

Actresses often reach their height of fame at the tender age of thirteen. Mlle. Leon-si-kwei's appearance was received with thundering applause when she was only sixteen. Mlle. Son Lan-fang is another actress of note who won fame among the artists of her day by the freshness and power of her voice and the exactness of her acting. Other women, taking the roles of men and women warriors, have won prestige.

The Mary Pickford of Southern China is Cheung Sook Kun, who is virtually the author of most of the plays in which she stars, and her troupe of actors is not permitted to interpolate their own words in her lines. She is said to be the highest paid actress on the Chinese stage, earning about \$17,000.00 a year. Mei-Lan-fang is the only actor who is reputed to receive more.

This brings us to China's real "leading lady" Mei-Lan-fang, who, though a young man of only thirty, has already won fame as well as fortune thru his talented presentations of women's parts. He came from a class almost as degraded as the coolies, and climbed the rough path of hardship, for "the childhood of an actor is no bed of roses in a land where the struggle for existence is so desperate, and ninety per cent constantly hover near the starvation line".¹ Nevertheless, his perseverance and marked ability brought him a comparatively early success, and today Mei-Lan-Fang's name is known all over China, and it is deemed a real privilege to see and hear him act. In 1919 a group of American bankers paid Mei-Lan-fang four thousand dollars for half an hour of acting and singing.

He gives the appearance of a youthful scholar rather than that of an actor. His manner is one of a true gentleman, cultured, well-read, refined, with a charming and vivacious personality. He is very fond of music, including the Western piano and violin, which he is trying to introduce on the Chinese stage. His library is very extensive, showing that he values the correct

1.

Zucker, The Chinese Theatre, p. 171.

historicity of ancient dramas. His costumes are also historically correct according to the time which they represent. He is vitally interested in his work, and works at it night and day.

His partner in the romantic plays is generally Chang-Miao-shang, although the acting and voice of the latter is much inferior to that of Mei-Lan-fang, according to Chinese critics.

When one realizes that the Chinese theatre has long been at a stage of arrested development, as are other Chinese institutions, he values all the more Mei-Lan-fang's attempt to bring "good taste and sensible innovations" to the theatre. Harmonious music appeals to him, variations in the old hackneyed themes of dramatic production, beautiful and graceful dances. He has the tactful ability of making innovations as well as adapting himself to his audiences, and therein lies his success. "Mei-Lan-fang's greatness lies in the fact that he is able to introduce bold reforms into the theatre without cutting himself off from the tradition."¹

1. Zucker, A. E., Chinese Theatre, p. 189.

historical of ancient drama. His costumes are also
historically correct according to the time which they
represent. He is vitally interested in his work, and
works at it night and day.

His partner in the romantic plays is
generally Cheng-Hua-shang, although the acting and
voice of the latter is much inferior to that of Mei-
lan-fang, according to Chinese critics.
When one realizes that the Chinese theatre

has long been at a stage of arrested development, as
are other Chinese institutions, he values all the efforts
Mei-lan-fang's attempt to bring "good taste and moral-
ity" to the theatre. Harmonious with the spirit of
his time, variation in the old fashioned themes of drama-
tic production, beautiful and graceful manner. He has
the careful ability of making innovations as well as
adapting himself to his audience, and therein lies
his success. Mei-lan-fang's greatest lies in the
fact that he is able to introduce bold reforms into
the theatre without cutting himself off from the tra-

To the Chinese, scenery is a "silly and unnecessary bother", but they certainly make up for it in the elaborate detail of the costumes of the actors. Decoration has become an essential part of Chinese drama, along with music and dancing and other variations which contribute to its novelty of production, according to Western standards. A brilliant court spectacle will be presented in magnificent costumes and accurate detail of dialogue, but without a bit of scenery.

Chinese dress was primarily designed for ceremonial reasons, to show men to the world as they wished to be known. Consequently it is very costly of material, and elaborate of design and decoration. Chinese tradition shows itself even in the conventional dress of the various characters. For instance, even a beggar's traditional stage dress is a silk coat of a gay checked design, while in the dress of a barbarian he must have the conventional bit of fur around his neck, no matter what the temperature is.¹ Costumes are accordingly so expensive that they are often hired from establishments who even furnish servants to care for them. Mr. Chu-Chia-Chien divides the Chinese costumes into three types:

1.

Buss, Kate, Studies in the Chinese Drama, p. 63

To the Chinese, economy is a "silly and
 unnecessary notion", but they certainly take up for it
 in the elaborate detail of the costume of the actors.
 Decoration has become an essential part of Chinese
 drama, along with music and dancing and other variations
 which contribute to the novelty of production, and
 ing to foreign standards. A brilliant, costly spectacle
 will be presented in magnificent costumes and accurate
 detail of dialogue, but without a bit of economy.
 Chinese drama was primarily designed for
 occasional seasons, to show men to the world as they
 liked to be known. Consequently it is very costly of
 material, and elaborate of design and decoration.
 Chinese tradition shows itself even in the conventional
 dress of the various characters. For instance, even a
 beggar's traditional straw dress is a silk coat of a
 gay checked design, while in the dress of a nobleman
 he must have the conventional bit of fur around his
 neck, no matter what the temperature is.¹ Costumes
 are accordingly so expensive that they are often hired
 from establishments who even furnish servants to care
 for them. Mr. Chu-Chia-Chien divides the Chinese cos-
 tumes into three types:

1. Hsueh, Kate, *Studies in the Chinese Drama*, p. 42

1. The ancient national costume.
2. The modern national costume.
3. Costumes of foreign countries.

The first are the most interesting, being worn by the majority of actors. They are rich in ornamentation and coloring, are mostly of silk, covered with small metal mirrors. They social position of the characters is not shown by the difference in texture of his costume, but by the style, color, and shape. The colors have a traditional significance as follows:

Red symbolizes joy and dignity.

White is the color of deep mourning.

Black is worn for less formal mourning, and also symbolizes severity and a humble condition in life.

Yellow is the color of the imperial family, of members of a religious order, and of old women.

Blue is the symbol of honesty and simplicity.

Green designates concubines and servants.

Rose is the color of gaiety and lightness.¹

Of course these are only the general schemes for colors, and there are many exceptions.

Those wearing the ancient national costumes are the civilian and military characters, both men and women. The male civilian character wears a long, full

1.

Chu-Chia-Chien, The Chinese Theatre, p. 30.

robe, like a kimona, which falls to within ten inches of the floor. One corner is turned back and attached beneath the right arm. The color varies according to his social position. For instance:

Servant: black robe, white cuffs, yellow sash, black boots and trousers, octagonal black bonnet turned down at the side.

Simple

Civilian: blue robe, white cuffs, without embroidery or sash, straight black bonnet, blue trousers, and black satin boots.

Young

Student: white robe embroidered with flowers, white cuffs, two-cornered white embroidered hat, trousers hidden under the robe, and black satin boots.

Sub-

prefect: blue robe with white cuffs, sash ornamented with white jade, a magistrate's hat (black) with two flaps falling onto the shoulders, hidden trousers, and black satin boots.

Governor: red robe with white cuffs, sash
of a decorated with white jade, magis-
Province trate's hat, black satin boots.

Emperor: yellow robe embroidered with dragons, white cuffs, sash decorated with jade, diadem of chiselled gold, black satin boots.

Male military characters are divided into warriors on horseback, and warriors on foot. The former

wears a helmet and a battle costume with metal discs, with four little flags often attached to his back. They are of the same color as the dress. The foot warrior wears an octagonal silk hat ornamented with red, rose, or blue pompon and mirrors, tight-fitting frock coat, falling below the waist, with trousers to match, black satin boots and a silk sash tied in front with gold-fringed ends. When not fighting, the warriors often wear a silk cape of bright color, embroidered in gold or silver.

Women civilian characters wear a shorter and less voluminous robe than the men, with a skirt displaying the bottom of the trousers, unless they are representing women of low standing who do not wear a skirt. The servant type wears a long waist-coat over a tight jacket.

The women warriors on foot and horseback dress slightly differently from the men. The woman on horseback wears a long robe like the male warrior, but smaller. She wears a kind of diadem, covered with small mirrors, and has two pheasant's feathers attached to her neck and two fox-brushes which fall around the neck on either side. A woman foot warrior wears a simple

costume which consists of a very tight buttoned vest and a pleated skirt with ribbons. Only the men wear hats on the stage, while the women have a variety of modes of hair dressing, ornamented with diadems, flowers, ribbons, or jewels.¹

Chinese make-up is very much different from anything that an Occidental can imagine. It is more like a colored mask painted on the face. Its advantage over a false mask is that it does not hinder speech. The conventions rule here, too, though there is the inevitable exception. A white mask generally denotes a "crooked" character on the part of a statesman, while a red mask is the sign of a righteous person. A black mask denotes a brutal nature. An actor, in making up, follows faithfully the traditions of the stage make-up of China. He would not presume to ignore such important things as the classic rules of theatrical tradition, which have been handed down to him from his teacher, and his teacher's teacher before him. Besides, he is fully aware that even if he did not respect traditions in this way, an innovation or omission in his make-up would be greeted with shouts of derision and perhaps of volley of tea cups

1.

Chu-Chia-Chien, The Chinese Theatre, pp. 30-32

on the part of the audience. The painted mask of tragedians covers the entire face, while that of comedians covers only part of it.

In the feminine roles the make-up is more intricate. It is, of course, necessary to give the actor the appearance of having a woman's small feet. He consequently has to wear small wooden feet attached to his tip-toes, and walk like a ballet dancer during the entire performance.

There are five general traditional character types in Chinese plays. These are:

Shen -- a male character, without make-up except for mythological parts.

Tsing or Hoa-Lien - (Flowered face) male part with make-up.

Tan - female character without make-up.

Mo - male character, old, without make-up, and of secondary importance.

Cheon - comic character of either sex, always with make-up. ¹

The specific characters are an interesting variety including the role of emperors, officials, youthful civilians, military leaders, villainous characters, scholars, all kinds of women characters, from empresses to beggar women, mythological characters in fantastic costume, and many others.

1.

Chu-Chia-Chien, The Chinese Theatre, p. 29

on the part of the audience. The pointed mask of
tragedians covers the entire face, while that of
comedians covers only part of it.

In the feminine roles the make-up is
quite different. It is, of course, necessary to give
the actor the appearance of having a woman's small
face. He consequently has to wear small shoes
fast attached to his hip-sock, and walk like a baller
dancer during the entire performance.

There are five general traditional

character types in Chinese plays. These are:

Shen - a male character, without make-up or
cost for psychological parts.

Tai - a female character (flower) male part
also make-up.

Wen - female character without make-up.

Mo - male character, old, without make-up,
and of secondary importance.

Chen - male character of minor role, always
with make-up.

The specific characters are an interesting
variety including the role of emperor, official, youth,
old official, military leader, villainous character,
scholar, all kinds of women characters, from princesses
to peasant women, psychological characters in fantastic
stories, and many others.

Altogether the combination of make-up and costumery on the Chinese stage presents a brilliant spectacle, with the faces painted in red, black, green and gold, with variations, the stiff brocaded gowns of elaborate design, the glitter of jeweled head-dresses and gold and silver ornaments, the imposing array of waving, colored plumes and clanking bejeweled swords! One cannot help remarking that the absence of scenery is not noticed in the face of such magnificence of costume.

Another very essential factor in presenting on the Chinese stage the vivid, colorful spectacle that ensues, is the music. The members of the orchestra sit at the back of the stage, and by their various musical instruments attempt to synchronize their music with the action that is being depicted. To a Westerner, Chinese music is a terrible din and clatter and crash, for, in most plays, the form of music is that which the Old Empress Dowager ordered. This was "a Mongolian style of music intended for open-air theatres on the wind-swept plains, which, in a roofed theatre is absolutely ear-splitting."¹ Mei-Lan-fang is endeavoring to bring back the traditional Chinese music, in which the music of the really pleasant sounding flute prevails.

1. A.E. Zucker, The Chinese Theatre, p. 188.

This type of music is called kuan-ch'ii, though er-huang and hsi-p'i are very similar. Both of these instruments came to Peking from the province of Hupeh, at the beginning of the Ch'ing Dynasty. They, with the pan-tzn type are considered rather vulgar music. This last is barbarian in a fashion, having come from Shansi province. In all of these types the rhythm is indicated by different kinds of wooden boards or boxes which are struck at intervals.

As a rule, the instruments are practically the same for the different kinds of music. The hsien-tzu is a sort of three stringed banjo, the sounding box of which is covered with snake-skin. The Yieh-ch'in (moon guitar) has four strings. Besides the ti-tzu, or flute, are the shou, a kind of bagpipe, the la-pa, a brass horn to announce distinguished personages. There are many different instruments of percussion, including the ch'iao-pan, (two flat boards tied together), the t'ang-ku, (a brass plate used in furious battle scenes) and the similarly used Peng-ku or drum, which gives a penetrating shrill noise when beaten rapidly¹ by thin sticks. The ku resembles our kettle-drum.

The size of the orchestra and the number of instruments used may vary, but these named are the

1.

Zucker, A. E., The Chinese Theatre, p. 149.

most important ones. Not all of these are used simultaneously, although an Occidental may be sure no sound is missing from the din that ensues. The wooden and brass instruments are used generally for the battle scenes, while those with strings and the wind instruments are used more as a voice accompaniment. The band master plays the pan-kiu, castanets, and marks the rhythm. The king-diau or Peking style of music is more suited to masculine parts, while the slower, more languid form is better for the feminine roles.¹

Chinese music is claimed to have existed as far back as 45 B.C. when Fou-hi played the seven stringed lute. Confucius wrote of music that was played in B.C. 2200, saying that it was passing through a decadent period during his own time.

Although Chinese music differs from ours in both interval and orchestrations, as well as notation, which is inexact and irregular, many people who understand it from the Oriental viewpoint have said that it possesses for them a marked degree of dramatic appeal. Some even agree with the Chinese in finding it "passionate, provocative, submissive, commanding, or sentimental," in accord with the action of the play, and

¹Chu-Chia-Chien, The Chinese Theatre, p. 24.

"of an inherent and singular beauty."¹

Mr. H. E. Krehbiel has said that the Chinese drama is today in principle a lyric drama in which the moments of intense feeling are accentuated not merely by accompanying music but by the voice of the actor, which breaks out into song. He states further that the "crudeness and impotency of the song in our ears has nothing to do with the argument. It is a matter of heredity."¹

¹. Smith, Arthur H., Village Life in China, p. 56.

CHAPTER V

The Conventions of the Chinese Stage

Although to a Westerner who is not accustomed to it, the action on the Chinese stage is stiff and conventional in almost ridiculous ways, he has but to remember that even on an Occidental stage certain conventions are observed which do not in any way destroy the illusion for him because he is accustomed to them. So it is with the Chinese. Tradition has demanded certain ways of acting under certain conditions for so long that he takes it as a matter of course. Even the orchestra on the stage does not spoil the illusion. Certain things take place in a particular way in real life to him, and when the same things take place in a different way on the stage, he accepts the change placidly.

The unique thing about Chinese acting is that it is suggestive, imaginative, to a high degree, but never imitative in a realistic way. Conventions determine everything. A hero is supposed to act in a certain way, always; a villain must act in another way, a magistrate or a warrior in another way, and the audience looks for and expects these traditional forms in dramatic performances. A certain kind

of music is expected to accompany specific moods and actions.

Since conventions play such an important part on the Chinese stage, certain symbols have come to be an essential to Chinese acting. Some examples are a whip, which represents a horse; a flag decorated with a fish, representing water; two flags, with painted wheels, representing a cart; two panels ornamented with rocks, to indicate mountains; a round object wrapped in red cloth to represent a human head; a fan to symbolize frivolity and extravagance, and hundreds of others.

A man waving a whip in a certain way shows that he is on a galloping horse; when he dismounts he turns on one foot and drops his whip, while to mount he turns on the other foot and picks up the whip. A heroine riding in a chariot of clouds will walk in with two horizontal flags on which clouds and wheels are painted. A criminal indicates that he is being hanged by standing under a bamboo pole on which a cloth has been tied, and throwing back his head. If a man is supposed to be executed, a conventional motion of the act is made by the executioner, and a red bag is held up, while the man walks off. A throne is suggested by a box on a chair; a river suddenly appears by several stage hands holding out pieces of cloth; a boat is represented by bamboo poles, or real oars, while the rowers stand in an inverted bench and to through the motions of rowing. One may ascend to heaven

of which is expected to accompany a series of articles and essays.
Kinda conversations may have an important part

on the Chinese stage, certain symbols have come to be an
essential to Chinese action. Some symbols are a whip, which
represents a horse; a line decorated with a fish, representing
water; two flags, with various details, representing a boat;
two people conversing with words, or indicate mountains; a
round object suspended in the air, or represent a human head;
a line representing a river, or a landscape, and mountains
of clouds.

A man waves a whip in a certain way when he
he is on a galloping horse; when he dismounts he turns on one
foot and strikes his whip, while to mount he turns on the other
foot and picks up the whip. A horse rising in a stable
of clouds will wave its two horizontal flags on which
clouds and wheels are painted. A circular lantern that he
is being raised by a hook under a cargo pole on which a
chain has been tied, and throwing back his head. If a man is
supposed to be executed, a conventional motion of the foot is
made by the executioner, and a red flag is held up, while the
man walks off. A corpse is suggested by a box on a chair; a
river suddenly appears by several small boats sailing out
pieces of clouds; a boat is represented by bamboo poles, or
real cane, while the towers stand in an inverted bend and
as through the motion of flying. One may ascend to heaven

by way of a ladder, and there will be no sign of mirth on the faces of the Chinese audience, merely solemn acceptance of such a method of attaining celestial bliss.

Tables, chairs, benches, cushions may all symbolize mountains, rivers, bridges, - anything. A man may jump into a supposed well, run off the stage, and the other actors will stand looking into the "well" as though he were still there. A general carrying a flag signifies to the audience that he has a thousand men behind him. There is one thing, however, that the Chinese audience demand - the actor must be clever; by his actions he must suggest the scenery that is not present, for if the illusion exists in his own mind, it will undoubtedly carry over vividly to that of the audience.

As for change of scene, this is often brought about by a rapid walk about the room by all of the characters. Two people may change seats, this places them in a different room. The passing of time at night is indicated by several beats on the kettle-drum, while a dream on the part of an actor is shown by the successive striking of a gong.

Gods and spirits are announced by the tapping of the gong as they walk on the stage, carrying their symbolic horsehair switches. Fireworks are set off by

a stagehand whenever a character from the other world appears. Ghosts of the dead wear black veils over their heads, or bundles of strips of paper under their right ears.

One might go on indefinitely giving example after example of these conventional ways of presenting life on the Chinese stage. It must be realized, however, that these symbols are to the Chinese an imitation of real life which has become conventionalized. And they accept it whole-heartedly, without "batting an eye" when the "property man" makes a hasty shift of furniture, or hands a fan to the heroine, or places a cushion before her to kneel on. Fighting warriors excite the Chinese audience just as much as though they were not merely going thru the motions in a conventional way, twirling their swords, and making imaginary lunges. And it matters not to them if one of them pretends to be stabbed and falls gracefully to the floor, like a wounded peacock, in all his colors, clutching his apponent's sword to his breast, for a moment before he gets up and runs off the stage. The Chinese imagination will fill in anything in the way of properties, if the actor has done his part well.

Chinese drama has already been compared with that of the Elizabethan theatre in regard to the important part played by the imagination in the absence of real properties, the crudeness of technique, the primitive simplicity of plot, and other things. It might as well be compared with the Italian Commedia dell' arte.

This form of drama among the Italians was a kind of farce or comedy in which the actors improvised their own speeches, much as the Chinese did, and still do in the old type theatres. In the Commedia dell' arte, as in Chinese drama, there was always an underlying theme of apparent dignity, but it was so twisted about, many times, that the most ridiculous situation was produced from a dignified tragedy.

The Italian actors in the Commedia dell' arte each possessed a book in which were jotted down a memorandum of ^{ent}entious remarks, figures of speech, love discourses, ravings, humorous quips and turns, all of which would be on hand when the "psychological moment" called for them. Unlike the Chinese drama, the Italian Commedia dell'arte was often obscene, but of course the actors had no rigid moral disciplinarian like Confucius to "haunt their memories" and guide their behavior.

In this Italian comedy certain tricks

Chinese drama has always been connected
with that of the European theatre in regard to the in-
terest part played by the imagination in the absence of
real properties, the absence of technology, the primitive
simplicity of plot, and other things. It might be said to
compare with the Italian Commedia dell'arte.
This form of drama among the Italians
was a kind of form of drama in which the actors repre-
sented almost any character, even as the Chinese did, and
acted on an old type of stage. In the Commedia dell'
arte, as in Chinese drama, there was always an underlying
sense of religious mystery, but it was as related to
that sense, that the most religious attention was pro-
duced from a simplified reality.
The Italian actors in the Commedia
dell'arte were dressed in a way in which were dressed
with a simplicity of costume, without the richness of
costly dress, and the actors were all of the same
of color, which was the case with the Chinese actors.
Called for them, the Chinese drama, the Italian
Commedia dell'arte was often played, but at times the
actors and the plots were altogether different.
In this Italian drama, certain things

and acts come to be conventionalized much as in the Chinese. For instance, when Pantalone came on the stage in the long, black robe and scarlet hose of a Magnifico of Venice, the audience knew at once that according to convention he would "speak Venetian patois, be stupid, avaricious, and amorous, and the dupe of the young people in the intrigue." Another conventional character was Gratiano, Pantalone's crony, who, although he figures in early plays in varying roles, behaves much the same in regard to manners and morals.

Another similarity was in the fact that one actor rarely took more than one kind of part, and kept collecting choice bits for that particular character. Again, there was much repetition of a good joke or trick until it came to be conventionalized.

The outstanding similarity, however, was the "flexible adaptability" of both the Italians and Chinese when it came to improvising lines to suit the occasion. This was developed to such an extent, in both cases, that it came to be a real art.

Improvising such as this, however, would necessarily take on the local color of the country; hence the Chinese innate humor and characteristics produced a result altogether different from the Italian.

Instead of having their masks painted on, as did the Chinese, the Italians wore ludicrous leather masks to increase the comic effect.

applied also to the old Chinese theatre, with all of its traditions.

There are three distinct types of theatre in modern China. They are:

1. The so-called "modern theatre", which is found only in large cities such as Peking and Shanghai. These contain an elaborate curtain, electric lights, and other modern appliances. In one case, even electric fans were used to cool the audience.
2. The Imperial Theatre is the one found at the Imperial Palace and Peking, which has a raised stage, but above the stage. The role actors take place in the middle stage, while the gods sit in the upper stage as if to control the actions of those

P A R T III

Chapter VI

Modern Tendencies

It has been said that at the present time everything in China is in a state of flux. This may be applied also to the old Chinese theatre, with all of its traditions.

There are three distinct types of theatre in Modern China. They are:

1. The so-called "modern theatre", which is found only in large cities such as Peking and Shanghai. These contain an asbestos curtain, electric lights, concrete or steel fire escapes, and, in one case, even sanitary shower baths for its patrons.
2. The Imperial Theatre in the New Summer Palace near Peking, which has three stages, one above the other. The main action takes place in the middle stage, while the gods sit in the upper stage as if to control the actions of those

below them. The lower stage represents the "warmer regions" to which the villains fall after being slain by the heroes.

3. In most parts of China, the third, or old-style theatre is predominant. This is the typical Chinese theatre which preserves the ancient traditions as shown in previous chapters.¹

There is a modern tendency in China toward a simplification of the intricate Chinese language by substituting a phonetic alphabet for the ancient classical system of ideograms. This will necessarily influence every form of Chinese literature, including the drama.

Many new books and plays have been recently published on the drama, which is ^adecided innovation, for before 1921 there were scarcely any, due to the contempt in which dramatic performances were held (theoretically) by the literati. Secretly, every high official, as well as the Chinese laboring man, enjoys hugely a theatrical performance, and many Chinese men, women and children know entire plays by heart, as well as snatches of the songs.

¹. Shen Hung, The Contemporary Chinese Theatre, Theatre Arts Magazine, January, 1920

In the last decade, Chinese students have been realizing that their national drama was inferior to that of other countries; that in spite of its naive presentations, it was very crude and primitive compared to the subtle Western drama. Accordingly, several Chinese "university wits" have written new plays requiring scenery and different presentation from the traditional style.

Chinese society today is composed of two conflicting elements. On one side are the traditions of their ancestors, the ideals of Confucius, superstitious beliefs, classical education, an autocratic family system; and on the other side are Western standards of independent thought, Christianity, superior education as taught in the mission schools and colleges, Western ideals of courtship and marriage.

The life of a returned student is full of such dramatic conflict that it is only natural that he may, in some cases, endeavor to express himself in a dramatic production. Dr. Hu Shih, a doctor of philosophy from Columbia, has translated into Chinese several well-known plays including "The Dolls's House", "Ghosts", "The Enemy of the People". Besides these he has written some plays of his own which show plainly the influence of Western thought on Chinese tradition.

Amateurs are presenting plays with a new note of realism on the Chinese stage, which sound strangely out of place to the Chinese accustomed to his traditional theatre. By these plays protests are being voiced against the tyrannical rule of the family system, the misery of the poor, the terrible consequences of opium smoking, the corruption of courts, and many other evils. Plays which overthrow a "hide-bound" tradition, or in which the villain is not punished at the end, as an inevitable conclusion, are commended by these young amateur dramatists. In the regular professional theatre however, the influence of these modern students has as yet made little impression. One realizes, though, that it will not be long before Mei-Lan-fang and some others will be able to separate the essentials in Chinese drama from the traditional forms which hamper its development. Chinese dramatists of the younger generation are beginning to realize that the Chinese stage needs a dynamic mode of expression which will adequately meet the needs of a modern, changing civilization like that of China.

Professor Soong Tsung-faung of Peking University makes the following suggestions on how to reform the Chinese theatre:

1. Music and drama should be separated. Performances of operas and plays should be made as distinct
2. An approach should be made to the Aristotelian unities.
3. The false morality of the stage should be replaced by a realistic presentation of life.
4. More attention should be paid to effective dialogue.
5. Male and female roles should be played by actors of the two sexes respectively.
6. The stage and auditorium of the Chinese theatre should be reformed to resemble that of the modern European theatre.
"Europeanize the theatre", in other words.¹

Dr. Hu Shih says much of the same thing. He adds that Chinese theatrical productions are in need of two things, - the conception of tragedy instead of the eternal happy ending, and a conception of dramatic economy.

Although the Chinese theatre presents an interesting, unique spectacle, with its appeal to the imagination in color and sound, a sympathetic spectator from the Occident must admit that eventually it must go. With the changing conditions of China in view, one realizes that it will be no more adequate to the Chinese in a few years than the Elizabethan theatre would satisfy the dramatic instincts of a Western audience today.

To a Chinese playwright or actor with a new vision for China's future, a wonderful field is opening, for the Chinese, as a people, are more responsive to an artistic dramatic production because of their innate dramatic tendencies, than to any other form of amusement.

To a Chinese playwright or actor with
a new vision for China's future, a wonderful thing is
opening for the Chinese, as a people, are now re-
sponsive to an artistic dramatic production because
of their innate dramatic tendencies, than to any other
form of entertainment.

W. H. P. S.
1911

S U M M A R Y

Legend states that the Chinese drama originated in the "Pear Garden" of Ming-Huang, an emperor of artistic temperament and emotion, who gave the first dramatic performance by a troupe of his own choosing and directing, as a favor to his beloved concubine, Yan-Kuei-fei. This led to the establishment of a sort of dramatic academy, and to this day actors term themselves "Students of the Pear Garden."

More realistic records state that the drama originated in worship of the deified dead, by song and pantomime.

Chinese dramas are classified according to their type of music.

Drama, as seen today, did not spring into being until the Thirteenth Century. During the Ming Dynasty, the type of plays changed to a many-act variety, although they were superior in some ways.

Chinese drama is strongly flavored with Confucian ideals. Every play must have a moral, and, with the exception of a historical play, a happy ending.

There are three types of plays, - historical, domestic, and farcical. No scenery is used on the Chinese stage, and a strong appeal is made to the imagination, much as in the Elizabethan theatre. In some ways, it is crude, primitive, and is never subtle.

The costumes of the actors make up for the lack of scenery. They are very elaborate and rich in symbolic design.

The Chinese stage does not, as a rule, present realistic scenes. Everything is conventional. Symbols are used continually - a whip for a horse, a fox'd tail to denote cunning, etc. The character types follow traditional lines, also, as does the form of "make-up". The Chinese orchestra plays an important part in the presentation of drama. The clashing of cymbals and rapid roll of drums is

synchronous with the fighting of two warriors; while less wild music is employed for more peaceful scenes.

In several respects, the Chinese theatre may be compared to the Italian Commedia dell'arte.

An actor must be also a good dancer, singer, and elocutionist, as he does all these things in the course of one play.

There are at present modern tendencies in China to "Europeanize the theatre", for certain, cultured Chinese of high literary standing realize that the Chinese theatre has long been static, and is no longer meeting the need of the people as a moral influence. Practically, it has become merely an amusement.

Modern China offers a great opportunity for young, educated Chinese to change the trend of drama upwards so that it will become in reality an expression of the hopes and despairs of the "inner Chinese" and not merely an artificial show.

sympathies with the thinking of the west, while
 less with China is enjoyed for more personal reasons.
 In general, however, the Chinese
 theatre has been compared to the Italian Commedia
 dell'Arte.

An actor must be able to play a good part,
 singer, and also a dancer, as he does all these things
 in the course of one play.
 There are no present modern theatres

in China or "Peking Opera" and "Shanghai", for example,
 cultured Chinese of high literary standing realize
 that the Chinese theatre has long been staid, and
 is no longer meeting the need of the people as a
 vital influence. Inevitably, it has become merely
 an amusement.

Modern China offers a great oppor-
 tunity for young, educated Chinese to change the
 trend of social opinion so that it will become in
 reality an expression of the hopes and feelings of
 the "New Chinese" and not merely an artificial show.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

- Bazin, Antione P. L., (Ed. and Tr.) Chinese Collections of Drama, (French).
- Buss, Kate, Studies in the Chinese Drama, The Four Seas Company, Boston, 1922.
- Clark, F. S., Seats Down Front, The Sunset, April 1925
- Coomeraswamy A., and S. Bloch, Chinese Theatre in Boston, Theatre Arts, February 1925.
- Chu Chia Chien, The Chinese Theatre, (Tr. from French by James A. Graham, London).
- Doolittle, Social Customs of the Chinese,
- Headland, Home Life in China and the Chinese Boy and Girl
- Hazleton, Geo. Cochrane, Jr., and Henry Berimo, The Yellow Jacket, (A Chinese Play done in a Chinese manner) 1913
- Irwin, W., Drama in Chinatown, Everybody's, June 1909.
- Morant, G.S., Modern Chinese Theatre, Living Age, October 28, 1922.
- Ridgeway, W., Ancestor Worship and the Chinese Drama, Quarterly Review April 1919.
- Stanton, William, The Chinese Drama, Kelly and Walsh Hong Kong 1899.
- Shen Hung, Contemporary Chinese Theatre, Theatre Arts Magazine January 1920.

W I L I A M S

William, George F. J., (1854-1914) Director, Williams College
 at Orange, Vermont.

Wright, Isaac, (1814-1884) President, Williams College
 at Orange, Vermont, 1854.

Wright, F. J., (1814-1884) President, Williams College
 at Orange, Vermont, 1854.

Wright, George F. J., (1854-1914) Director, Williams College
 at Orange, Vermont, 1854.

Wright, George F. J., (1854-1914) Director, Williams College
 at Orange, Vermont, 1854.

Wright, George F. J., (1854-1914) Director, Williams College
 at Orange, Vermont, 1854.

Wright, George F. J., (1854-1914) Director, Williams College
 at Orange, Vermont, 1854.

Wright, George F. J., (1854-1914) Director, Williams College
 at Orange, Vermont, 1854.

Wright, George F. J., (1854-1914) Director, Williams College
 at Orange, Vermont, 1854.

Wright, George F. J., (1854-1914) Director, Williams College
 at Orange, Vermont, 1854.

Wright, George F. J., (1854-1914) Director, Williams College
 at Orange, Vermont, 1854.

Wright, George F. J., (1854-1914) Director, Williams College
 at Orange, Vermont, 1854.

Wright, George F. J., (1854-1914) Director, Williams College
 at Orange, Vermont, 1854.

Smith, A Corbett, Chinese Drama Yesterday and Today,
Living Age August 9, 1913.

Smith, Arthur H., Village Life in China, F.H.Revell
Company, 1899.

Williams, F. S., Chinese Theatre, The Asia April 1918.

Zucker, A.E., Chinese Wits and the Drama, Saturday
Review April 25, 1925.

Zucker, A.E., Peking Playhouses, The Asia April 1925

Chinese Theatres of Shanghai, Living Age, April 25, 1925.

Chen Kwang Theatre and its Significance, Living Age,
November 4, 1922.

Motion Pictures and the Chinese Theatre-goers,
Scientific American, October 7, 1916.

Reading the Heart of the East Through the Drama,
Current Opinion, January 1913.

Contemporary Theatre in China, Review of Reviews,
December 1912.

Chinese Plays, True and False, Literary Digest,
March 13, 1920.

MADE IN U.S.A.

BOND

WHEBWHITE

MADE IN U.S.A.

BOSTON UNIVERSITY



1 1719 02487 3863

NOT TO BE TAKEN
FROM THE LIBRARY

28-7

Ideal
Double Reversible
Manuscript Cover
PATENTED NOV. 15, 1898
Manufactured by
Adams, Cushing & Foster

